

**CONTACT: Jeff Lustgarten or George McQuade
Cerrell Associates, 323/466-3445**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 17, 2002**

SCAG ADOPTS RESOLUTION TO PREVENT WATER TRANSFER FROM IMPACTING SALTON SEA

Board Resolution Sites Potential Impacts of IID/San Diego Water Transfer on Level of Salton Sea

LOS ANGELES, CA. – In an attempt to help efforts to protect and reclaim the Salton Sea, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) adopted a resolution opposing projects that would significantly lower water levels in the Salton Sea. SCAG's resolution joins the Salton Sea Authority and the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVA G) in urging full environmental reviews of the proposed water transfer between the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and the San Diego County Water Authority.

The proposed water transfer agreement under consideration would involve the transfer of 200,000 acre-feet of agricultural water to San Diego, while a separate transfer proposal would move an additional 100,000 acre-feet of the IID's water entitlement to the Coachella Valley Municipal Water District. Environmental impact studies indicate that these diversions, along with other agricultural water conservation, are likely to reduce the volume of drainage from agricultural activities into the Sea.

Significant water changes during many years are threatening bird biodiversity and abundance in the Salton Sea, which is among the most important bird resources in North America and has the greatest biodiversity of bird species in California. A major new reduction of water inflows to the Salton Sea resulting from the proposed transfers will lead to a reduction of seawater elevation, and could potentially expose large areas of seabed, diminishing the sea's vitality. In this scenario, the exposed lakebed could jeopardize the Imperial and Coachella Valleys' air quality compliance efforts for particulate matter and could lead to substantial economic disruptions and health impacts.

SCAG was instrumental in the initial joint powers agreement that led to the Salton Sea Authority, created to protect and preserve the environmental and economic qualities of the Sea. SCAG currently serves as an ex officio member on the Salton Sea Authority. Cathedral City Mayor Pro Tem

- more -

Greg Pettis, SCAG's representative on the Authority, requested that SCAG's Energy and Environment Committee and Regional Council consider the resolution last week.

The resolution adopted by SCAG urges the IID Board of Directors to consider water transfer solutions that mitigate environmental impacts on the Salton Sea and are consistent with ongoing efforts to reclaim the Sea. The resolution also urges the IID Board to employ transfer solutions that meet the terms of the California Colorado River Water Use Plan's Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) regarding the amount of Colorado River water California will be allowed to use. Finally, the SCAG resolution supports ongoing congressional efforts to ensure that the impacts of water transfers on the Salton Sea and the Imperial and Coachella Valleys comply with federal environmental laws.

During the past three decades, SCAG has evolved into the largest regional planning organization in the United States, functioning as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for six counties: Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside and Ventura. The six-county region encompasses a population exceeding 16 million persons in an area of more than 38,000 square miles. As the designated MPO, SCAG is mandated by the federal government to research and develop plans for transportation, growth management, hazardous waste management, water resources, and air quality. For more information about the work of the Southern California Association of Governments, visit the SCAG website at www.scag.ca.gov.